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CUTLER 87

THE AUTHOR

By J. M. BARRIE

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By J. M. BARRIE

A SATIRICAL ATTACK ON
THE ORGAN OF THE SOCIETY OF AUTHORS
WRITTEN FOR "SCOTS OBSERVER"
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THE HISTORY OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS TO THE PRESENT
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THE AUTHOR



THE AUTHOR is the organ of the Society of Authors, which has in its council, besides Lord Tennyson, Mr. Meredith, and Mr. Hardy, such eminences in literature as J. C. Parkinson, Robert Bateman, A. W. Dubourg, and the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. Mr. Walter Besant is the life and soul of the Society, and he also edits the Society's Magazine. For Mr. Besant we have a high respect and in the Society a selfish interest, but The Author—well, the truth about The Author is that it should be hidden away in Mr. Hardy's "locked bookcase" lest the common enemy should see it and laugh. The Society's reason for being is to frighten publishers into common honesty. The reason of being of The Author is to let us see how the Society is getting on. Alas! The second number lies before us, and a mournfully amateur print it is.

From the many contributions by "Aspirants" one gathers that Aspirants are its public, and that, so far, nearly all the Society has accomplished is to warn these gentlemen against expecting to make a competency out of non-professional magazines. Anyhow, the Society thinks the woes of Aspirants worth columns. Here,

for instance, is the "hard case" of a gentlemen who paid a guinea to the "London Literary Society" on the understanding that it would "place" a story. He received a diploma and a recommendation to send his manuscript to a periodical called Lloyd's Magazine. Lloyd's Magazine gave him a prospectus about talented authors receiving immediate insertion, and the editor explained that you were talented if you could buy twenty-four copies at sixpence each. The Aspirants bought his twelve shillings' worth of talent, with the result that he was "heartily disgusted" for, says he—(in what looks like an interval of real lucidity)—"To judge by the calibre of its contents all the contributors must have paid as heavily as myself to induce any one to print their productions." He is now a happy member of the Society, and is only mentioned here as a sample of the kind of "author" Mr. Besant thinks worth saving in shoals. But there is no single case of the righting of a literary man. Perhaps the literary man will not come forward; but that is no excuse for publishing the woes of Aspirants in what purports to be his own trade organ. The Lancet does not publish pages from indignant invalids in dispraise of Beecham and his Pill.

If you are a member of the Society you have the privilege of keeping The Author acquainted with your work and your engagements. You send in an announcement that you are busied upon a life of H. M. Stanley, and it appears under the heading "At Work." Now, most literary men would be glad to find some way of keeping gossip about what they are writing out of

type; and it is a little confusing to the intellect to come upon a print that kindly invites them to write their own preliminary paragraphs. The result is not stately; indeed, it suggests that if the author's vanity be as the actor's there is no reason why The Author should not be a literary Era, and that perhaps the time is coming for a page of author's "cards." Here, for example, is the result of a slight rearrangement of some "At Work" paragraphs:

MR. W. M. ROSETTI.

Specially Engaged by the Clarendon Press.
Disengaged in October.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

Resting.
Back at Christmas.

MR. EDMUND GOSSE.

Engaged by W. Heinemann, Esq., for "International
Library" Series.
See Press Notices.

MR. WALTER BESANT.

Full up till 1892.
Sole Agent—A. P. Watt, Esq.

MR. WILLIAM SHARP.

The Handy Man.
Open for a New Series.

MASTER RUDYARD KIPLING.

Thanks Walter Scott, Esq., for Offers.

See next week.

Another attractive feature of the theatrical journals is the column about the social pleasantries that pass between actors and actor-managers and manager-author-actor-critics. Undoubtedly authors admire each other as much as the members of "the profession" do, but we don't hear enough about it. When The Author is a great estate like the Era, it will perhaps "behave as sich." To wit, in manner following:—

"A most interesting ceremony was gone through on Thursday last at Messrs. Longman's much respected publishing office. Before the clever clerks of the Office Mr. Jones, one of the highly-esteemed readers, presented his father with an ebony walking-stick."

"It is pleasant to see cordial relations existing between employers and employed, and we have therefore much gratification in announcing that Mr. Austin Dobson, the charming poet, has given a copy of his new and excellent work to his esteemed publishers. We understand that this fortunate writer has had to decline two offers this week of a highly remunerative character."

"Miss Marie Corelli was in Piccadilly on the 4th of April in a hansom when a broker's van ran into a 'bus. Fortunately Miss Corelli's cab was at the other

end of the street, and the talented lady, our readers will be glad to hear, escaped unhurt."

"We regret to have to announce that the brother of Mr. Montgomery Russet, the popular novelist, was followed to the grave on Wednesday. As a token of brotherly affection Mr. Montgomery Russet has ordered a monumental stone to be erected without delay."

"Mr. Editor,—Sir, In your generous notice of my new book of poems you spell my name with only one l. May I request you to correct this without delay in the interest of the public?—Yours respectfully, Marion Reilly (First Prize Stylist, Pall Mall Gazette)."

On these lines The Author would not be less useful (we regret to say) than now. Unless it developed into an Era the literary Era will probably be started by some other persons. Conducted with spirit, this might be a noble property.

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